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MK NEWS

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Merry Christmas and a happy New Year

TO ALL OUR READERS AND ADVERTISERS!

We begin our review of 2013

SEE PAGES 14-17

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HOLIDAYS ARE HERE: People pose for pictures by the Coca-Cola truck

Coca-Cola truck proves pop-ular

HUNDREDS of people visited the famous Coca-Cola truck when it stopped by at thecentre:mk on Friday.

Shoppers were greeted with free cans of coke, some artificial snow and a band playing the popular 'Holidays Are Coming' tune immortalised in the company's festive adverts - as well as some other seasonal songs.

Many of the visitors were families with their young children who posed for pictures outside the lorry for a photo to treasure in the family album.

Stuart and Lisa Thompson, from Netherfield, visited the truck with their young daughters Beth, nine, and three-year-old Amelia.

Stuart said: "We missed it when it came to Wolverton last year. It's been great, you know it's Christmas when you hear that song!"

Royal pardon for Turing

BY JAMES AVERILL

james.averill@mk-news.co.uk

BLETCHLEY Park hero and code-breaker Alan Turing has been given a posthumous pardon by Queen Elizabeth.

Dr Turing (*pictured*) is credited with saving thousands of lives as part of the team that cracked the Germans' Enigma code, helping shorten the Second World War by two years.

He was convicted of 'gross indecency' with another man in 1952, when homosexuality was illegal - resulting in a sentence of 'chemical castration'.

There has been a long campaign to clear Dr Turing's name, including a well-supported e-petition and Private Member's Bill, along with support from leading scientists such as Sir Stephen Hawking, and members of the public in Milton Keynes.

This week's pardon, under the Royal Prerogative of Mercy - requested by Justice Secretary Justin Grayling - clears the man who has often been described as the 'father of modern computing'.

One of the leading figures of the pardon campaign has been Conservative MP Iain Stewart, who himself is openly gay.

Mr Stewart, who represents Milton Keynes South, told MK NEWS: "This royal Pardon is a just reward for a man who was stripped of his honour, his work, and the loyalty he showed his nation.

"I am over the moon that justice has prevailed. I have campaigned since being elected; I mentioned it in my maiden speech and have pushed the discussion at every further opportunity. It is a move that is right and fair."

Iain Standen, CEO of the Bletchley Park Trust, praised the 'genius', adding: "The pardon gives further recognition for his outstanding contribution not only to World War Two codebreaking but also the development of computing."

Labour's parliamentary candidate for Milton Keynes South, Andrew Pakes, said that he was 'pleased that the Government had listened to campaigners'.

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MKNEWS BRIEFS

Still time for Lakes views
RESIDENTS still have time to air their views on the draft neighbourhood plan for the Lakes Estate. A final public drop-in will be held at the Town Council offices on Queensway, Bletchley, on Saturday January 4 from 10.30am to 12.30pm.

Fine for noisy neighbour
A NOISY neighbour that played his music 'so loud the doors shook' has been silenced and fined at Milton Keynes Magistrates' Court. Darren Williams, of Taranis Court, Wavendon, pleaded guilty to breaching a Statutory Noise Abatement Notice on Friday. He was fined £110 and ordered to pay £200 costs to MK Council and a victim surcharge of £20.

Passenger dies in crash
A WOMAN, aged 40, from Milton Keynes, has died following a fatal car collision. The crash, in Yardley Hastings, Northamptonshire, took place just after 1pm on Saturday. The woman, who was a passenger, died at the scene. Two men, aged 28 and 65, from MK and Olney respectively, were taken to University College Hospital with serious injuries.

£270m deal for centre
HALF of thecentre:mk has been sold by Hermes Real Estate for £270m. A 50 per cent stake has been purchased by Australian Super. A spokesman for Australian Super said: "We have monitored the UK market and thecentre:mk is an excellent fit for our portfolio."

Fraudster stole ID of dead girl

BY JAMES AVERILL
james.averill@mk-news.co.uk

A FEMALE fraudster has been jailed for seven years after stealing the identity of a dead child and pretending she was a vicar in a sickening £265,000 swindle.

Yvonne Doyle, of Ladymeadow Court, Middleton, was sentenced at Reading Crown Court on Friday, having been found guilty by jury in July following a six-week trial.

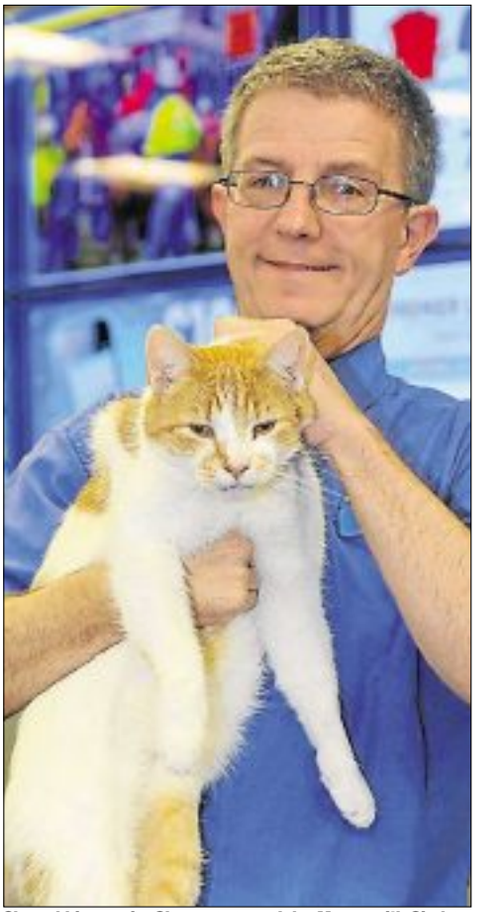
Judge Angela Morris was told that the 63-year-old stole a dead four-year-old's identity in the fraud lasting decades. She then used the name of Carol Ann Naylor, who died in 1951, to falsely claim a string of benefits she was not entitled to.

Doyle (*pictured*) also posed as a vicar during the scam.

Doyle was arrested in Ireland in 2012, after being subjected to a European Arrest Warrant.

For more on this story: Visit www.mkweb.co.uk

Doyle sobbed as the judge told her: "You deceived the Department of Work and Pensions and Milton Keynes Council. The result was that by fraudulent means you acquired substantial public and private money that you were not entitled to."



Clawed his way in: Shop manager John Moore with Simba, aka 'William', who has warmed the hearts of St John Street

Cat is odds on favourite with betting shop

A BOOKMAKERS is thinking of opening up bets on how often a friendly cat comes into their shop each day.

The moggie, who lives above William Hill in Newport Pagnell, sits outside the branch everyday until he can sneak in when a customer opens the door.

The ginger and white feline, called Simba, has become famous in St John Street and customers at Laura Lloyd nail salon have nicknamed him William.

A spokesman for William Hill said: "The manager of the shop in Newport Pagnell is thinking of opening bets on how often the cat comes into the shop everyday."

A shop employee added: "He sits outside the door and darts in when somebody opens it.

"He is a really friendly cat and seems to just love the attention he gets from our customers and now everybody else on the street."

Laura Lloyd's owner and manager, Lynn King, said: "Everybody loves him.

"The Indian restaurant Moza like him and I think they even feed him sometimes.

"Our customers like him but we don't want to encourage him to cross the road.

"He has definitely become famous in Newport Pagnell."

Ho Ho Ho Merry Christmas: MK Dons players with MK Hospital's Leo the Lion, staff and presents

Dons bring festive cheer

MK Dons players and staff put on their best Santa impressions to give gifts to the children at Milton Keynes Hospital.

Skipper Dean Lewington, David Martin, Lee Hodson and Tom Flanagan were joined by assistant manager Gary Waddock and goalkeeping coach Paul Heald in the Dons' annual visit to the children's ward. The club worked with MK's Toys R Us branch to ensure all the children receive a special gift including toys, mp3 players, a video camera, board and car games and more.

The Dons also gave the ward a Google Nexus 7 Tablet thanks to club partners Misco.

Alison Turner, ward manager, said: "We have a lot of young patients who need to have painful procedures, and so a tablet will be used for distraction therapy to help take their minds off the pain."

Plans for park and 250 homes

BY JAMES AVERILL
james.averill@mk-news.co.uk

A DEVELOPER is looking at potential plans to build 250 houses on a new estate at Linford Lakes.

Barratt Homes has submitted a screening opinion request for the proposed development of land off Wolverton Road at Great Linford.

The plans comprise 70 hectares of a development of up to 250 residential dwellings, new accesses onto Wolverton Road and Little Linford Lane, internal access roads, ancillary recreation and play space.

It also sets forward plans for the creation of a 59 hectare country park and visitor centre, together with car and coach parking for up to 200 vehicles.

A screening opinion request comes before submitting a planning proposal, where potential applicants can apply for an opinion on whether a development should be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment.

Andrew Swindell, managing director for Barratt Homes Northampton, said the area had 'great potential' for development and hoped to submit a detailed planning application during 2014.

He told MK NEWS: "Linford Lakes is a privately owned fishing venue and has never been open to the public. We have secured an interest in the land and now have the opportunity to create, along with The Parks Trust, a country park and visitor centre which will be of enormous benefit to the community."

Share your views on this: www.mkweb.co.uk

MKNEWSBRIEFS

Courier fraud scam

A COURIER scam is doing the rounds in the city where victims are called allegedly from their bank or the police. The fraudsters tell victims of irregularities on their account and ask them to call their bank. This call is answered by the scammers to get your details and arrange to collect and replace your card. For more advice see our story online at www.mkweb.co.uk.

Bin collection day

BIN collections days have changed this week because of Christmas. Wednesday's collection is now on Friday, Thursday's has been moved to Saturday and Friday's is now on Monday.

Man saved by the bell in fire

A MAN has been saved by his recently installed smoke alarm after he feel asleep while food was cooking.

Firefighters from Bletchley and Great Holm rescued him from a second-floor flat at Rutland House, Middlesex Drive, Bletchley, on Sunday before 6am. A resident from the flat above called 999 after smelling smoke and hearing the man's alarm.

Watch manager Chris Montague, from Bletchley Fire Station, said: "This shows what can happen if you start cooking when you are tired or have just got back from a late night out."

Singers pack out cinema

CAROL singers packed out Cineworld to have some festive fun in aid of a good cause on Thursday.

St Mark's Church took over a screen at the Xscape venue for their 'Glow' evening - raising funds for domestic abuse charity MK ACT. The successful evening capped a good year for St Mark's Reverend Paul Oxley - who won a competition to be the voice of BBC Radio 2's 'Pause for Thought' - his last of which is broadcast today.

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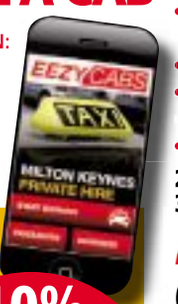

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We also deliver an additional 8,000 copies each week into public buildings, offices, industrial areas, bars, restaurants and shops for people to read that may not live locally and receive a copy at home.

According to the latest independent, audited readership figures, MK NEWS has a weekly readership in excess of 130,000 adults and this figure is growing as we add on more copies to our distribution across MK. We aim to deliver the best possible service to our readers but if you have any questions or concerns about distribution please feel free to contact our team on the number listed above. Our deliverers earn top rates of pay. If you'd like to join our team please contact the distribution department on the number above.

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Where are the roads?

WITH the recent article on the predicted growth of Milton Keynes and the importance of infrastructure to MK's success (*'We could be in top five cities', MK NEWS, December 11*), isn't it ironic that a development the size of Newport Pagnell is underway on the western flank of Milton Keynes without the provision of grid roads through or around it?

Milton Keynes Council has failed miserably to ensure proper road provision is incorporated into this development, so talk of the importance of infrastructure and of 'meticulous planning' ring hollow to say the least.

Alan Howkins
Sent via email

Appeal of choccy boxes

CONGRATULATIONS to MK NEWS for championing the Milton Keynes Food Bank and mobilising your readers to support your Selection Box Appeal (*'Chocolate treat for MK's hungry', MK NEWS, December 11*).

Encouraged by MK NEWS, the whole city has got behind the food bank, which provides food parcels for our fellow citizens who are living in difficult circumstances.

However, we must not lose sight of the fact that we are the seventh richest country in the world and we must question why so many of our citizens need this assistance.

Unfortunately the coalition government's austerity measures, in just three years, have increased poverty and created a perfect storm of pressures on people's budgets.

Deep cuts to welfare benefits and public services, low wages and the high cost of living are putting unbearable pressures on many households, forcing them to seek help from the food bank.

Hopefully, MK NEWS and the generous people of Milton Keynes will continue to support the local food bank – keep up the excellent work.

Dave Brunwin
Stony Stratford

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Optimistic about 2014

BEFORE Christmas and New Year comes around I wanted to write a short letter and give my view on 2013.

Christmas and New Year are such optimistic times of year; people have a confidence and happiness sometimes rare to find during the long weeks at work.

I am going into Christmas with optimism about the year ahead.

This week we have seen a wave of good news:

Apprenticeship scheme figures for Milton Keynes showed that 2,300 young people now have the opportunity to enter a place of work. It is vitally important that we train young people to meet the needs of businesses as we compete in the global race.

On the economy, the ONS announced 30 million people are now in work, the highest ever number, and in Milton Keynes unemployment has fallen once again from 2.6 per cent to 2.3 per cent. Almost 400 new business units were set up in MK in 2013.

The Government has had to make some tough decisions in 2013, but the green shoots of recovery show that the plan is working. We have cut the deficit by a third, 1.4 million new private sector jobs, net immigration cut by a third, crime down by more than 10 per cent, benefits capped and an average tax cut of £600 for 24 million people.

It is important that as a city and a nation we continue and not give up on the past years of hard work.

Economically 2014 is a year I am optimistic going into. The Office for Budget Responsibility is forecasting a 2.4 per cent growth in the UK economy for 2014. There is no doubt, as we have seen before, Milton Keynes will play a key role in this growth.

This city is a buzzing hub for business, we have some of the biggest names in the world setting up shop and, of course, we have an ever growing number of SMEs taking advantage of MK's ambition.

There is still more to be done. I will continue to emphasise the importance of apprenticeships and vocational training, I will carry on championing HS2 and the benefits it will give the city and I will carry on lobbying the Chancellor to give more support to businesses.

I know this government is willing to take the tough decisions we need to so that future generations are not burdened with our debts. I truly believe that thanks to the steps this government has taken, in the long run the country will have more money in its pockets, not in Government debt, and the UK will be the best place in the world to do business.

If we keep on the path we are going we will continue to see positive figures like we have seen this week.

I am looking forward to 2014.

Iain Stewart MP

Check out the recovery

I AM very pleased to note that shops have been overcrowded with customers in the run-up to Christmas.

After two years of recession, the country has moved into a slow economic recovery and people have more money to spend.

The austerity measures taken by the Government by cutting down social security benefits, reducing expenditure and creating more jobs for unemployed youngsters have helped in this recovery.

Arun Vaidyanathan
Sent via email

Jon Brett's City Life

His column written exclusively for MK NEWS

PUTTING the politics to one side; ignoring arguments about parking charges and potholes, 2013 has been a pretty good year.

As I look back through my cuttings, there appears to be quite a common theme...showbusiness.

The year kicked off with an exclusive interview with Gary Barlow's musical director, former Newport Pagnell resident Mike Stevens. He talked about life on the road with one of the biggest bands ever.

I returned to my old office at BBC Television Centre in London before it was sold off; rock hell raiser Fin Muir played a comeback gig in the unlikely setting of the Swan pub in Stewkley and Olney resident and former Foundations crooner Clem Curtis gave us an exclusive taste of his homemade red hot sauce!

I also managed to get tickets for the most intimate gig ever performed by my hero, Billy Joel, when he played Hammersmith Apollo.

I try and vary the theme for each column and I covered the passing of Margaret Thatcher and looked at the legacy she left behind in Milton Keynes.

Travel also featured heavily, with reports from Dubrovnik; an eye watering account of nasal hair removal from Turkey and, more recently, a trip to Liverpool.

Closer to home, my observations on the old food centre and new casino struck a chord with readers who shared some of the concerns I outlined.

However, the stand out moment of the year for me has to be the marriage to my beautiful wife in August. Quite simply a magical day.

I feel privileged to be able to share my thoughts and ideas with the readers of MK NEWS and I'm always grateful for any feedback received.

And so, I'd like to wish you all a happy Christmas and look forward to writing for you again in the New Year.

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Charity calender: Milton Keynes Rugby Club's 'gay biker-themed' calender for Cancer Research

Camp calender of rugby men

BEEFY blokes from a rugby club have swapped sweaty shorts for luxury leathers for their latest charity calendar.

The men got on their bikes on an away day to Blackpool – to collect cash for Cancer Research UK and the club's junior training school.

The latest calendar follows the success of their naked shoot, which sold more than 1,000 copies. This time, the boys kept most of their clothes on in snaps from their 'gay biker-themed' rugby tour.

Their chosen charity has become close to their hearts recently, with one player being diagnosed with testicular cancer and the loss of a long time friend and supporter to cancer just weeks ago, aged 37.

The calendar's proceeds will also help the Mini-Junior Section fund, supporting kit and coaching costs.

The club said: "This calendar is offered as a seasonal gift.

"However, if you can support the above causes you can donate at www.localgiving.com/search?name=milton+keynes+rugby."

'I'll blow up MK trains on moon'

BY JULIA SUTTON
editor@mk-news.co.uk

A MAN has pleaded guilty to threatening to blow up Milton Keynes Central rail station 'from the moon'.

Paul Leslie Blatchford, 39, of Mount Wise, Newquay, admitted making the nuisance call on July 16 and telling the operator to 'f*** off' before hanging up.

He pleaded guilty to making the threatening message during a hearing at Truro Magistrates' Court last week.

Blatchford said he suffered from a mental disorder and wanted to know what he could do to be sent to prison.

He had made the remark about blowing up the station to get arrested and said he would commit more offences if he wasn't.

Blatchford later told the police he made the call after reading a statement regarding a previous incident in Milton Keynes, which he had tried to explain to the operator, and got angry.

Blatchford, who admitted being in breach of a conditional discharge for two previous assaults, had his case adjourned to January 17 for a probation report.

MKNEWS BRIEFS

Deputy cop leaving

MILTON Keynes' Deputy LPA Commander, Chief Inspector Ed McLean, is to leave the city to become LPA Commander in High Wycombe.

Six arrested by cops

A MAN has been charged with possessing a kilogram of cocaine. Ali Amin, from Bletchley, was one of six men arrested after the recovery of £20k of cash and drugs on December 10.

Business is booming

NEARLY 400 new business units have opened in MK over the past year according to the Annual Business Register.

Underpasses get cabinet's vote

THE cabinet of Milton Keynes Council has agreed to make it policy that underpasses be the preferred crossing for grid roads in the new Western Expansion area.

During the meeting last Wednesday, councillors agreed to ignore a technical report that put forward footbridges as the preferred option, with these only to be considered if an underpass is not feasible.

Cllr John Hawthorn, who is a ward member for Stony Stratford, said: "We have been fighting this for nine years, and it is a great relief that it is finally over."

MK Council reject petition

A PETITION calling on MK Council to make a commitment not to evict tenants in arrears because of the bedroom tax has been rejected.

Milton Keynes Defend Council Housing and Campaign for Benefits Justice presented the petition which was signed by more than 1,000 people.

Cllr Edith Bald, cabinet member for housing, said that making such a commitment would 'not be sensible'.

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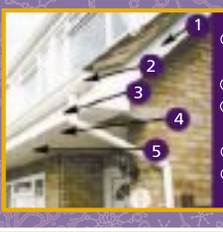

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FURNITURE Village of Milton Keynes

Prison for fake window cleaner

BY JESSICA DUNCAN
jessica.duncan@mk-news.co.uk

A 20-YEAR-OLD man has been sentenced to two and a half years imprisonment after pleading guilty to a string of fraud and theft offences across the city.

Ally Gillan, of no fixed abode, was convicted and sentenced at Aylesbury Crown Court on Thursday, December 12.

Gillan admitted seven offences; four fraud and three thefts that occurred between May and September this year.

He targeted the vulnerable and elderly, stealing purses and taking payment for jobs like window cleaning that he did not actually complete.

Gillan also asked for a further 15 offences to be taken in to consideration at court.

On sentencing, the judge also applied a restraining order upon Gillan's release, whereby he cannot attend residential properties requesting money for services or offering services for payment in England and Wales.

Jail sentence: Ally Gillan, 20

He is also banned from attending any residential properties asking for money in England and Wales.

He must not approach anyone in a public place requesting money for services or offering services for payment unless in paid employment or registered with a charity or voluntary organisation in England and Wales.

Investigation officer, Detective Sergeant Kelly Gardner, said: "These offences had a big impact on the victims as Gillan had befriended some of those he targeted and they believed that they could trust him.

"This sentence and the restrictions that have been place upon him on release from prison should ensure that he is unable to impose threat on any further victims."

As MK NEWS previously reported in October police were warning residents of a suspicious window cleaner who was taking money from the elderly and vulnerable residents in the area without doing the job.

Police have linked these previous incidents that were reported with Gillan.

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Invacare Orion	8mph	20m	£1,499	£899
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Pride Colt Plus	4mph	20m	£999	£799
Kymco Midi XL	8mph	24m	£1,399	£899
Invacare Orion	8mph	20m	£1,499	£899
Days ST6	8mph	35m	£2,999	£1,499
Colt Plus	4mph	20m	£999	£799
Invacare Leo	4mph	20m	£995	£695
Tga Mystere	8mph	25m	£1,999	£1,399
Invacare Comet	8mph	35m	£2,299	£1,499
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Kymco Maxi XLS	8mph	35m	£2,495	£1,799
Kymco Midi XLS	8mph	25m	£1,999	£1,399
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TGA Breeze	8mph	35m	£2,499	£1,499
Invacare Comet	8mph	35m	£2,299	£1,499
TGA Breeze	8mph	35m	£2,499	£1,499

Model	Speed	Miles/ Range	Normal Price	Sale Price
Kymco Midi XL	8mph	25m	£1,499	£899
Days ST4	8mph	25m	£1,499	£699
Shoprider Cadiz	8mph	24m	£1,499	£699
TGA Eclipse HD	4mph	16m	£795	£495
TGA Eclipse HD	4mph	16m	£795	£495
Rascal Vision	8mph	35m	£2,999	£1,999
TGA Breeze S	8mph	35m	£2,999	£1,999
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Pride GOGO Elite	4mph	9m	£695	£495
Pride GOGO Elite HD	4mph	16m	£795	£545
TGA Mystere	8mph	25m	£1,999	£1,399
TGA Eclipse	4mph	9m	£695	£595
TGA Eclipse	4mph	9m	£695	£595
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Cheers: Bryan Rimmer, *right* – a Fleet Street journalist – tracked down the infamous Ronnie Biggs during a trip to Brazil to test a Ferrari car. Ronnie shows off his humour with the picture's caption

'When dad met robber Ronnie'

AFTER the death of great train robber Ronnie Biggs, XENIA RIMMER recalls the day her journalist dad Bryan met him in Brazil

DAD was made an offer he couldn't refuse. Would he like to test one of Ferrari's new cars? In Brazil?

Dad drank to that because, through some of his other less salubrious drinking pals, he happened to know where in Rio the infamous Ronnie Biggs was on the run.

The way dad tells it, arranging to meet Ron for a brew or two was surprisingly simple.

All he had to do was have a word with one of his underworld snouts in London and there was Ronnie's address in Rio. And, for good measure, his phone number.

When in Brazil, dad phoned Ronnie and suggested they do a spot of nightclubbing. No probs, said Ron!

That night, the pair of them spent the evening cosying up to scantily-clad customers and the cocktails at a nightmerie Ron had an interest in.

The talk revolved around how much Ron missed not Blighty, but Worcestershire Sauce.

He didn't regret a minute of the heist, he said, nor the years on the run.

Ronnie had blown his bags of swag years ago, but he hadn't lost his sense of humour, providing the caption for the picture of them roistering together.

Read the full story online: www.mkweb.co.uk

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Saviour: Paul French sings after magician had to cancel

Crooner saves the day for pensioners

A FREEMASON saved a pensioners' party by getting up on stage – after the main act called in late to cancel.

Paul French, 48, is chairman of the Roman Way Masonic Lodge that had organised the Christmas knees-up for pensioners from community homes in Stony Stratford and Two Mile Ash.

But when a magician failed to turn up, Paul got on stage to belt out some songs, saying: "I had to sing for somebody else's supper!"

Extra homes to help B&B crisis

BY JAMES AVERILL
james.averill@mk-news.co.uk

MILTON Keynes Council has set aside funds to buy properties that will help families stuck in B&B accommodation.

At a meeting of the authority's cabinet on Wednesday, Councillor Edith Bald, who is responsible for housing and regeneration, told the chamber of plans to get 30-40 properties.

She told MK NEWS: "We had £1million a year set aside for future development in the next three years from the capital housing and revenue accounts.

"But given the B&B situation and the fact we didn't really need reinvestment of that level for the next three years, we saw it as a good idea to invest in council homes.

"We are hoping to get an extra 30-40 properties, but the decision is subject to full council agreeing it in February – but it would be foolish to not agree with it."

Share your views on this: www.mkweb.co.uk

The council has been dogged this year by its record on housing families in B&Bs.

By the end of June, 60 were in temporary accommodation longer than the six weeks that are legally permitted.

But Cllr Bald added: "B&B figures are coming down and I would like to see the numbers down to 20 by the end of the year if I can."

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Cloudy2Clear service the Bedford, Milton Keynes & Leighton Buzzard areas and Billy is finding that his approach is a major factor in his success. 'The truth is that it's not just the personal satisfaction that I get from doing a good job but also it makes good business sense. I get a huge amount of business from friends and family of people I've done work for, which just goes to show how much a little bit of effort is appreciated.'

So, if your windows are steamed up, broken or damaged give Billy a call for a free quotation on **0800 61 21 118** and he'll be happy to help!

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REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2013

From Greg's gong

IN THE next two issues of MK NEWS we recall the memorable stories from the last 12 months

Pancake race winner Devon

JANUARY

THE new year began well for Greg Rutherford, with the Olympic gold long-jumper being recognised in the New Year's Honours List by the Queen, picking up an MBE.

A driver escaped without any serious injuries after their silver BMW crashed into HW Mason & Sons Funeral Directors in Newport Pagnell High Street.

A gang of metal thieves were jailed following a £700,000 crime spree, including the theft of 900 metres of BT cabling in Leadenhall. It left hundreds of customers without telephone services.

The city mourned the death of popular musician and tattoo artist Joe Kent, who died after an attack outside Xscape.

Sharmake Abdulkadir and Fuad Awale were sentenced to a combined total of 70 years behind bars after the murders of two teenagers in Fishermead in 2011.

FEBRUARY

A WHISTLEBLOWER who had raised concerns about the safety of the city's bridges won an employment tribunal after his employers, Mouchel, made him redundant.

MK Gallery saw a frenzy of visitors after local artist Tomas Georgeson claimed to have hidden an £8,000 cheque in the building. The cheque was never claimed.

A man had a miraculous escape after accidentally firing a nail gun into his own chest – narrowly missing his heart.

Market traders 'jumped for joy' after plans to move the outdoor market at thecentre:mk and build a Primark were withdrawn.

Devon Byrne, 19, retained her title as winner of the Olney Pancake Race.

MARCH

MORE than 13,000 angry readers viewed the CCTV image on our website of a man who burgled Willen Hospice.

'Historic debts' dramatically forced Milton Keynes and North Bucks Chamber of Commerce to cease trading.

Prime Minister David Cameron visited Mercedes-Benz apprentices in Tongwell and Jessie J lookalike Melissa Frayne 'welled up' after seeing her trademark locks shaved off for charity.

■ Continued on pages 16&17

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MK – Birmingham	£65	£75	£85	£130
MK – Heathrow (T1-T5)	£65	£75	£85	£130
MK – Stansted	£70	£80	£90	£130
MK – East Midlands	£70	£80	£90	£130
MK – St Pancras (Eurostar)	£75	£90	£100	£140
MK – London City	£75	£90	£100	£140
MK – Gatwick	£95	£110	£120	£170
MK – Southampton Cruise	£130	£150	£170	£220

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REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2013

to an £8k cheque

Golden Greg: Long jump champion Rutherford picked up an MBE in the New Year's Honours List

Melissa shaved off her hair

Search: MK NEWS reporter James Averill hunts for an £8,000 cheque

DO YOU HAVE ONE OF THE WORST PERFORMING PENSION FUNDS?

We've been reviewing pensions for many years now.

We never cease to be amazed at how poor some people's pensions are. In our experience if you have a pension with one of the following companies you are highly likely to need to have your pension/s reviewed.

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AXA

Clerical Medical

This is to name just 15 of the companies whose pensions we've found to be invariably very poor.

You see a lot of pension companies have sold high charging, poor performing pensions to the public many years ago and continue to rely on customers' apathy to keep levying those high charges and keep underperforming fund managers because they cannot keep the best ones.

Many of these pensions are closed to new business such as Equitable Life

Tony Byrne
Chartered and Certified Financial Planner
Author of Wealth Magic

which is in all but name an insolvent company.

When companies close to new business there is no incentive to reduce fees as they do not need to attract new business and they know not many people will transfer their pensions away from them. Often there are penalties for transferring and some of these penalties can be large.

In addition to this the most talented pension fund managers don't want to stay with a company that has closed funds. The best fund managers move to the pension companies that continue to grow successfully.

So do you have a pension with one of more of the above listed companies? If so you really should seriously consider getting your pension/s reviewed. We have our own unique pension review service and have used it to review literally hundreds of pensions. In our experience 8 out of 10 clients who have their pensions reviewed would benefit from transferring away from their existing schemes.

So what are you waiting for?

To find out more why not come to a free retirement planning seminar at our Furzton Lake offices? We are also offering a free pensions and retirement assessment worth £270 to the first 10 people who contact us before 15th January 2014. For details go to www.wealthandtax.co.uk/pension.

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REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2013

Mosque attack, bus

■ Continued from pages 14&15

APRIL

THE implementation of the controversial 'bedroom tax' was introduced this month.

It meant anyone with a 'spare' room lost 14 per cent of their housing benefits.

A National Housing Federation report has since shown MK is the third hardest hit town in the South East, with 1,609 families charged an average of £812 a year extra.

Thousands of patients at Willen Village Surgery were given just one day's notice before it closed.

The Thames Valley and Chiltern Air Ambulance (BOB) was chosen as MK NEWS and MKWeb's charity of the year.

Residents across the city showed their support for the life-saving service by helping to raise vital funds. They included retired pensioners Graham Large and Alan Talmer who travelled as far as they could using only their bus passes. They made it to York and raised £1,230.

MK NEWS joined forces with MKWeb to launch a bigger and better community and news website.

Big fat gypsy mess at reserve

MAY

AFTER 2,794 miles, MK Dons fan Adam Faiers completed his away game cycle challenge and raised more than £8,000 for the club's Sports and Education Trust and Redway School.

MK NEWS and MKWeb launched its Love MK campaign to highlight good news stories from the city with a specially designed logo.

A faith council chief would not be swayed from his plans to 'build a climate of mutual trust' between different communities after an attack on a mosque in Bletchley following the death of Drummer Lee Rigby. The comment was made by Richard Wightman, chairman of Milton Keynes Council of Faiths, after a burning bottle was thrown onto the roof of the Zainabiya Islamic Centre.

Milton Keynes was named as a Rugby World Cup host city. The stadiummk will be the venue for three matches during the 2015 tournament.

JUNE

THE Government announced it would spend £10million dualling the A421 into MK from junction 13 of the M1 and improving traffic flow at the Kingston roundabout.

Taxpayers footed a £41,000 bill after travellers left a huge mound of rubbish at the Blue Lagoon nature reserve.

Fun and frolics took place in the Theatre District during the Mascot Olympics, which was supported by MK NEWS and MKWeb.

■ See more next week

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REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2013

passes and gypsies

On the buses: Graham Large, *left*, and Alan Talmer raised money for BOB, our charity of the year

Mascot madness in MK

Celebration: Milton Keynes is named as a Rugby World Cup host city

Raymond Gubbay presents

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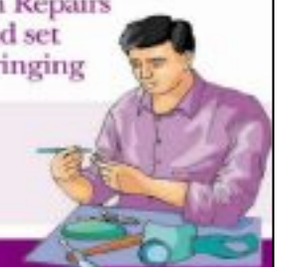

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THE city's schools, businesses and policy makers are all being invited to a BBC Question Time-style panel debate on the future of education.

The meeting will be held at Shenley Brook End School on Thursday, January 9 at 6pm.

In partnership with the Association of School and College Leaders' (ASCL) Great Education Debate, it aims to get the views of members of the community who have all been in education. To attend call 01908 524894.

Debate: Students are practicing for next month's event

Don't have presents stolen at Christmas

BY JESSICA DUNCAN
jessica.duncan@mk-news.co.uk

FOLLOWING a spate of burglaries across the city over the last few weeks, police are urging you to make sure you still come home to your Christmas presents.

They are asking you to keep gifts out of view, as placing them near windows will only draw attention to your house and the rest of its contents.

You should also be cautious when using social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

Leaving messages advertising that your home is empty by showing you are somewhere else or counting down to your holiday is an easy way for burglars to be able to know when to target your property.

You could invest in a timer to open and close your curtains or turn on your lights, or better still, ask a family member or neighbour to pop in and do it at random times of the day so a potential thief does not see an exact pattern.

Finally, you should dispose of boxes and rubbish discreetly around Christmas.

Leaving boxes outside will give away the fact that you have new and valuable items in the house.

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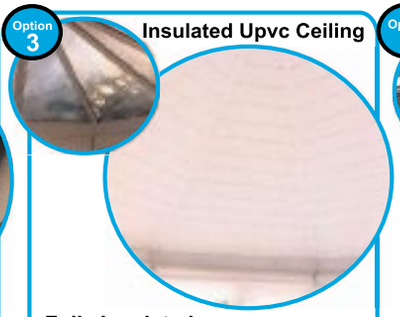

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MKlife

your guide to leisure in your city

Leisure or events news? e-mail **editor@mk-news.co.uk** phone **01908 689595**

Film pays tribute to Nelson Mandela

THE recent news of Nelson Mandela's death has caused the world to unite in remembering one of life's greatest heroes.

But it is nothing more than circumstance that Mandela: Long Walk To Freedom should arrive on our screens so soon after he has passed away.

Idris Elba stars in an epic biopic of South Africa's iconic first democratically elected President – and is already being praised for a 'towering performance' by critics.

Born and raised in a remote South African village, the youthful Mandela (Elba) is a revolutionary activist whose struggle against the racist apartheid regime makes him incredibly unpopular.

During his journey he marries Winnie (Naomie Harris), before he is convicted of sabotage and conspiracy to overthrow the government.

Made with the full support of Mandela himself, this biopic charts a lifelong struggle for freedom that ends in triumph.

It has been adapted from Mandela's autobiography by Gladiator writer William Nicholson and comes out in all local cinemas on January 3.

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christmastreats

GREAT British Bake Off contestant, Mark Onley from Milton Keynes, *pictured left*, has a rather unique recipe to make use of your Christmas leftovers:

It's Boxing Day morning when you hear the dreaded words echoing around the house: 'What's for dinner?'

So how about this for a quick and easy solution...an Xmas pizza.

Bases are easy to come by in your local supermarket, I prefer the uncooked ones as they rise nicely and have a really good flavour.

For toppings I use tomato puree with a pinch of oregano and a small pinch of basil, about a tablespoon on a 12-inch base is ample. You can then layer it with a cheese of your choice (grated mozzarella is good!).

For an extra topping though, as it's Christmas, how about battered sprouts?

Any leftover sprouts will do, a tempura batter mix is best as it's nice and light. Some garlic and chilli salt goes nicely in the batter and gives them a little kick. Deep fry for about one to two minutes and they are ready to go.

So there you go, my tip for a Boxing Day leftover meal and maybe the kids will even eat the sprouts this time around!

weekendtrip

MK LIFE is offering one lucky reader and their family the chance to win a fabulous weekend in Birmingham.

To celebrate the festive campaign Christmas now trending in Birmingham, Visit Birmingham, in association with London Midland, Retail Birmingham and Southside BID, is offering visitors the opportunity to explore the city.

Over the weekend of January 18-19, 2014, the winner plus their family (another adult, plus two children) will stay in a five star Staying Cool penthouse at the top of Birmingham's iconic Rotunda building, where they can enjoy stunning views of the city.

Also on offer is the chance to visit The Old Rep Theatre, home to the Christmas production of Tom's Midnight Garden, where Tom is transported to a secret garden when the grandfather clock chimes 13 times.

Meals have been provided by two of Birmingham's top restaurants.

The Oriental, serving Malaysian cuisine with waterfront views, and the Marco Pierre White Steakhouse Bar and Grill, with its lively atmosphere and exquisite food.

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partynight

TOP DJs will help you see in the new year at Cookies and Cream.

The nighclub, located in the Theatre District, has booked in Spaniard Hector Couto and Tuccillo, who is originally from Italy, to make it a night to remember.

The New Year's All Nighter takes place at 8pm. Tickets cost from £10 from info@clubcookiesmk.com or 01908 234234.

birdwalk

THIS is an opportunity to see nature at its most riveting in the company of the experts.

The Parks Trust is holding its first Bird Walk of 2014 on New Year's Day around Willen Lake.

You will be joined by members of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds who will help you notice the difference between a Partridge in a Pear Tree or a Rocking Robin.

Meet at the car park in V11 Tongwell Street at 10am for the event, which is suitable for all ages.

Your essential guide to events big and small throughout Milton Keynes

MK life HOT PICKS

soulsounds

A SOUL and funk band are returning to the city.

Soul Selecta, fronted by Nicky Prince, will be covering classic to modern soul and funk interpretations, bringing a night of fun to the Slug and Lettuce in the Theatre District.

The show takes place on Friday at 8pm and tickets range between £4 and £12. They can be bought at www.ents24.com/milton-keynes

rollerdisco

GET your skates on for a family roller disco at Bletchley Leisure Centre.

On Friday, children from five years old can skate with their friends and family from 8-10pm.

Tickets cost £5 and £1 for skate hire. To find out more call the centre on 01908 377251.

getfit

BURN off your Christmas lunch at Fit MK classes.

The outdoor gym at Willen Lake runs various classes, including boot-camps, pilates and box fitness. Sessions, which cost £7, run throughout the week. To find out more visit www.fitmk.com

pantoworkshop

JOIN Milton Keynes Theatre for a family workshop of panto-themed fun.

The workshop, from noon to 1.30pm on Saturday, January 4, will involve a look on stage at the panto set, arts and crafts like wand and crown making, the chance to make dads look like panto dames and games.

The workshop is suitable for children aged three to eight, who must be accompanied by an adult. Tickets cost £5 per person from 01908 547500.

children'sadventure

LOOKING for something to do with the children this New Year's Eve? Then a visit to 360 Play could be the answer.

The children's adventure centre in Knowlhill offers a range of activities, from its three-storey play structure to its messy play area. The centre will be open from 9am-4pm and entrance costs £3 for adults, £8.25 for children aged four to 12, £6.25 for one to three-year-olds and under ones go free. See more at www.360play.co.uk

computerfun

ENJOY a 'byte' of family fun at The National Museum of Computing.

Between Friday and Tuesday you can enjoy all sorts of digital wonders and extraordinary devices as part of the Christmas Bytes Festival.

There will be LEGO Mindstorm EV3 activities and retro computer games like space invaders and Pac-Man at the museum, based at Bletchley Park.

Tickets to the event, open from noon to 4pm each day, cost £5 for adults, £2.50 for concessions and under 12s go free.

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alcohol services for the community

alcohol services for the community (asc) is an independent charity which aims to promote a healthier lifestyle without the reliance on alcohol or other drugs by providing qualified and experienced professionals to support prevention and treatment. The asc philosophy is not anti-alcohol but believes in a sensible approach to drinking.

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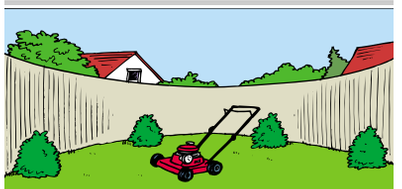

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Proposed planning application for the development of Land South of the A421

Wavendon Residential Properties LLP and Merton College Oxford will be submitting a planning application for the development of land south of the A421, north of Lower End Road which is leased to Wavendon Golf Academy.

The proposals will provide around 350 homes, playing fields and public open space. The land is part of Milton Keynes Council's wider Strategic Land Allocation and is included in their adopted Core Strategy.

More information about the proposals can be found at the website www.south-of-A421.com

You can provide feedback on these proposals through the website or by emailing mail@south-of-A421.com

Alternatively please contact the Project Team at David Lock Associates: 50 North Thirteenth Street, Central Milton Keynes MK9 3BP or telephone 01908 666276.
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Public Notices

THE COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF MILTON KEYNES (BURCHARD CRESCENT (PART), SHENLEY CHURCH END) (TEMPORARY CLOSURE) ORDER 2014

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Council of the Borough of Milton Keynes intends, in not less than seven days from the date of this Notice, to make an order under Section 14(1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, the effect of which will be to temporarily prohibit vehicles from entering, waiting or proceeding along that part of Burchard Crescent, Shenley Church End, Milton Keynes from its junction with the V4 Watling Street (the north-western end) to its junction with Benbow Court (the north-western end) whilst surfacing and reconstruction works are carried out to the carriageway. It is anticipated that the temporary closure will be in effect from 6 January 2014 until 2 February 2014 for 24 hours of every day.

Whilst the temporary restrictions are in effect the alternative route will be via Burchard Crescent and the V4 Watling Street, and vice versa.

There will be no exemptions from the provisions of the proposed order except for emergency services vehicles and military vehicles being driven on operational duties.

The closure and its alternative route will be clearly signed in accordance with Chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs Manual.

The temporary restrictions will be in force on the dates shown when indicated by the appropriate traffic signs displayed in the affected part of road.

Access to residential properties within the affected length of road will be maintained throughout the closure.

The proposed order will come into operation on 6 January 2014 and will continue in force for a maximum period of 18 months or until the said works have been completed, whichever is the sooner. If the works are not completed within the maximum period stated, a further order may be made.

Any person committing a breach of the order will be liable upon prosecution to such fine as is prescribed by the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

24 December 2013

Civic Offices
1 Saxon Gate East
Milton Keynes

Ifty Ali
Principal Solicitor – Law & Governance

Milton Keynes Council

The following applications may be inspected at the Planning, Economy and Development Department, Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate East, Milton Keynes. Representations, if any, to be submitted in writing to the above address within 21 days of the publication of this notice.

SECTION 73	**WITHIN A CONSERVATION AREA**
13/02520/FUL	Conversion of site to 6 dwellings at Land Adjacent To 29 - 35 Vicarage Road, Stony Stratford
13/02524/FUL	Erection of a wall at the front of the house using reclaimed bricks and blue engineering bricks (Retrospective) at 43 Anson Road, Wolverton
13/02578/TCA	Notification of intention to dismantle 1 x London plane tree (3) located at the back of centre; prune 2 x London plane trees (5 and 7) by reducing crown by 1 - 3m; prune 1 x London plane tree (4) by reducing crown and spread by approx. 1.5 - 3m and reduce tree height and spread by 20% at The Agora Centre, Church Street, Wolverton
13/02590/FUL	Single storey rear extension and insertion of pitched roof dormer to rear elevation at 123 High Street, Stony Stratford
13/02596/FUL	Demolition of rear yard buildings, erection of three dwellings and conversion of existing workshop into residential dwelling at 8 High Street, Olney
13/02603/FUL	Replacement upvc windows to front elevation at 78 Windsor Street, Wolverton

NICK FENWICK
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR PLANNING AND TRANSPORT

NOTICE OF MAKING PUBLIC PATH DIVERSION AND DEFINITIVE MAP STATEMENT MODIFICATION ORDER TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990, SECTION 257 WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1981, SECTION 53A (2) MILTON KEYNES FOOTPATH 32 ORDER 2013

The above Order was made on 17 December 2013. The effect of the Order will be to divert the public footpath from the end of the redway adjacent to Sustrans cycleway known as Route 51, proceeding to an easterly direction for 23 metres, curving southerly for 14 metres and then easterly for 592 metres to join with the underpass to Brickhill Street (V10).

To create an alternative footpath instead running from the point marked B on the Order Map at NGR SP48779/238849 in an easterly direction for a distance of approximately 280m then proceeds South East for a distance of approximately 75m. The route then proceeds to a north easterly direction for approximately 150m before turning East and following a series of small turns over an approximate distance of 140m where it joins the underpass to Brickhill Street (V10) as shown on the Order Map. If confirmed as made, the Order will modify the definitive map and statement for the area by adding to it the footpath as described.

A copy of the Order and the Order Map may be seen free of charge at the Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate East, Milton Keynes MK9 3HG from 9.00am to 5.00pm. Copies of the Order and Map may be obtained free of charge.

Any representation or objection relating to the order must be sent in writing to the Principal Solicitor-Law & Governance, Milton Keynes Council, PO Box No.111, Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate East, Central Milton Keynes MK9 3HG (Ref: Legal Services/ Oakgrove/ 005684/NA) not later than **27 January 2014.**

If no representations or objections are duly made to the order or if any so made are withdrawn, the Council of the Borough of Milton Keynes, instead of submitting the order to the Secretary of State for the Environment may itself confirm the Order. If the Order is submitted to the Secretary of State any representations or objections which have not been withdrawn will be sent with it.

Dated: 24 December 2013.

Principal Solicitor - Law & Governance

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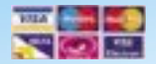

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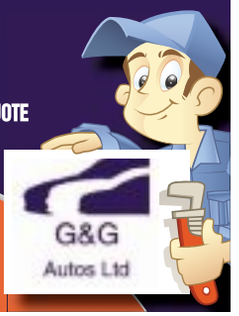

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RUGBY UNION

Job done for Bletchley in festive shield derby

BY SCOTT KIRK
scott.kirk@mk-news.co.uk

A BUMPER crowd of more than 300 watched Bletchley overcome Milton Keynes in the Bucks Shield final on Saturday.

Bletchley had targeted the trophy as a key priority at the start of this season, and head coach Stuart van Rooyen was ecstatic that his charges fulfilled the ambition thanks to a 20-3 success.

"Both myself and Pete Garret (forwards coach) were extremely happy with the performance and result of the cup encounter.

"I don't think everyone realises the amount of effort and commitment the lads put in.

"We have been working for this since July and it was one of our targets we set ourselves at the start of the season to win the Bucks Shield."

MK kicked off with the strong wind behind them but it was Bletchley who took the lead after 10 minutes.

From the line-out, Bletchley went through several phases before MK kicked the ball clear at a ruck. Paul Mellon read the kick well and stayed strong in possession as MK chased the ball. Bletchley passed the ball quickly through the hands out to Will Garrett running in support from full back. He angled his run from the right wing under the posts to score the first points of the afternoon, and Phil Harman converted to make it 7-0.

It was scrappy from the restart and both sides exchanged scrums as handling became tricky in the weather conditions. Eventually, MK were rewarded for their play at the breakdown with a penalty just inside Bletchley's half. With the wind behind them, it was the right decision to go for the posts, but the ball went just wide of the uprights with 16 minutes played.

An excellent break from flanker Matt Nobes set Bletchley on their way for try number two. He off-loaded to Paul Mellon who chipped over the MK winger before chasing his own kick. MK were forced to carry the ball over their own try-line, setting up a five metre scrum for Bletchley. Eventually a neat off-load to Harman allowed him to get over the try-line despite the attention of two tacklers for a 12-0 lead at half time.

MK were down a player after 44 minutes and Harman took advantage of the penalty to extend Bletchley's lead to 15-0, but those extra points were wiped out when MK struck a penalty of their own for 15-3.

Steve Allen touched the ball down to give Bletchley a healthy 20–3 lead after 54 minutes and despite pressure from Milton Keynes, Bletchley held firm to win.

FINAL ACTION: Bletchley (purple) got the better of Milton Keynes in Saturday's final. Picture: Anderson Photographics. More pictures can be found online.

ICE HOCKEY

Lightning halfway to festive points target

MK LIGHTNING are halfway towards their target of eight points by the end of the festive fixtures, according to head coach Nick Poole.

It was four points out of four this weekend as Lightning claimed a double win over Slough Jets, scoring 14 goals in the process.

And Poole said the team wanted at least another four points from their next three games, which begins with a trip to local rivals Peterborough Phantoms on Boxing Day.

On December 28 Lightning have a home tie against Sheffield Steeldogs, who MK beat for the first time this season last week, and then it's a formidable looking home game against Manchester Phoenix on December 30.

"Our goal was to get eight out of 10 points from this run of games and we've got four of them, so now we want to get those four or six more if we can," said Poole.

"All three games will be tough as Peterborough have had a few player changes, and we've struggled against Sheffield and Manchester this season."

But it was far from a struggle for Lightning this weekend, which began with a 7-1 success on Saturday.

Slough had no less than nine changes from the previous time the two sides met at Coventry at the beginning of November, and it took the hosts just five minutes to open their account when Tom Carlon's shot hit the metalwork seconds before Janne Jokila fired high into the net from Blaz Emersic's pass.

Jets had no time to recover as Ross Bowers scored, while Janne Jokila got the third.

Carlon scored Lightning's fourth and he got his hat-trick to make it 5-0 after 16 minutes.

Jets pulled one back and after a goalless second period, Leigh Jamieson scored to make it 6-1.

Emersic made it 7-1 against his former side 13 seconds later to seal the result.

On Sunday Poole felt his side were a touch complacent when they conceded an early goal.

But that was the only time Lightning were behind as they went 2-1 up, and eventually ran out 7-4 victors.

Tom Carlon bagged a brace, while there were also goals for Blaz Emersic, Michael Farn, Grant McPherson, Lukas Zatopek and Janne Jokila.

FESTIVE FEEL: Jordan Cownie in Lightning's Christmas kit against Slough. Picture: Jez Tibbetts

SPORTSSHORTS

NON-LEAGUE FOOTBALL

LAST week looked like a tough one for Newport Pagnell Town and that is exactly what it proved to be as they lost both their games in the United Counties League Premier Division.

First up it was third-placed Huntingdon Town, who are unbeaten on the road this season, and Niks Savalnieks gave the visitors a 42nd minute lead.

The Swans pressed in the second half to no avail and Savalnieks sealed Huntingdon's victory 20 minutes from the end, slotting in after a free kick rebounded from the crossbar.

On Saturday it was league leaders Spalding United on the agenda, who have lost just once in 20 games this season, accruing 57 points out of a possible 60.

Newport succumbed to a 4-0 defeat as Sam Mullarkey opened the scoring after 10 minutes.

Mullarkey turned provider on the half hour, setting up Lewis Webb to score, and three minutes later Tidswell's 20-yarder made it 3-0.

The second half saw Spalding continue to dominate but the woodwork and a series of fine saves from Martin McIntyre kept them at bay.

Mullarkey's 76th minute goal completed the scoring.

In the Spartan South Midlands Football League Division Two, Wolverton Town lost 3-1 at Hale Leys United.

Roni Joe and Marcus Hussey gave United a two-goal advantage by half time, and Tom Brindley's 83rd minute penalty sealed the game. Jesse Waites pulled back a consolation in the 89th minute.

New Bradwell St Peter lost 1-0 at home to Tring Corinthians.

FORMULA ONE

RED Bull Racing have announced that Pierre Waché, chief engineer of car performance, will take over responsibility for the vehicle dynamics department for the team with immediate effect.

Having been recruited 12 months ago, Pierre joined the team from Sauber in June and is now well positioned to take on this new role.

The team thanked Mark Ellis and Giles Wood for their contribution and wished them well for the future.

ATHLETICS

FOURTEEN Marshall Milton Keynes Athletic Club members represented Buckinghamshire at the Southern Inter-County Cross Country event in Biggleswade.

The best team result was eighth for the Under 13 Girls with Amber Harman finishing 84th in a time of14m 04s.

Another landmark for the dlub during the week has been the renewal of its Clubmark, awarded by Sport England to 'show that a club provides the right environment which ensures the welfare of members and encourages everyone to enjoy sport and stay involved throughout their lives.'

Clubmark is the universally acknowledged cross sport accreditation scheme for community sports clubs and it was five years ago that the Club became one of the first in Milton Keynes to acquire this status.

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Christmas cheer for Lightning - page 39

'We're getting there'

BY SCOTT KIRK
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DONS midfielder Stephen Gleeson says the team are still not quite at the level they want to be – but they are getting a lot closer.

A 2-0 win over Port Vale on Saturday followed consecutive victories against Wolves and Dover Athletic, and the Irishman is hoping the team can now gain more momentum over Christmas.

He said some clear the air talks prior to the Wolves game have got the team back on the straight and narrow after a previous poor run of form.

"We've gone back to basics in the last two weeks," said Gleeson.

"The prior six weeks haven't been good enough and it's just confidence.

"We're getting the opportunities now and we're taking them.

"We could have been five or six up at half time against Port Vale so maybe we need to practice our shooting some more.

"We said it wasn't good enough before Wolves and the lads have really taken that on board.

"There was criticism and words said before that Wolves game and the last two matches we've come out and been counted."

Gleeson was on the scoresheet by thumping a beauty of a first goal past Port Vale, and he says his lack of goals this season is ironic considering the extra distance he feels he is covering on the pitch.

"It has been a long time coming," he said of his maiden strike this season.

"I've been getting in the box more often so maybe I need to stay out.

"It hasn't fallen for me at times this year even though I've been getting in the box and I've been up and down the pitch more. Against Port Vale I just hit one and it's gone in so it's weird the way football goes sometimes, but hopefully I can get a few more."

TAKING AIM: Stephen Gleeson blasts home against Port Vale
Picture: Andy Handley

Gleeson's superb performance was all the more impressive considering he has been fighting the flu all week.

He said: "I'm not feeling great at the moment so I just need to rest for a few days and hopefully I'll be ready for Boxing Day against Crawley. I caught the flu off my partner during the week so she got in trouble for that!

"I was never not going to play – I was surprised to get 80 minutes but I hope to rest for a few days now."

A trip to Crawley is on the agenda for Boxing Day, and Gleeson wants the Dons to now go on a run of wins. "I've been told Saturdaywas the first back to back league wins this season which for a team that wants to go up is disgraceful, so hopefully we can build on these wins and go three, four or five games which we need to do," he said.

"The confidence is coming back - it's not perfect yet but we're getting there."

Robbo: Let's keep feet on the ground

KARL Robinson is determined to keep his side's feet on the ground after they surpassed Port Vale with a comfortable 3-0 success on Saturday.

It was the first time the Dons had managed back-to-back league wins this season following the 2-0 victory at Wolves last week, and manager Robinson said the final play-off berth was within the sights of the club.

"We knew how difficult it would be against a team doing well on the road in the shape of Port Vale," said the Liverpudlian.

"At half time at 3-0 up I said 'give me a 0-0 from the second half' and they gave me that as well so I can't ask any more of them.

"We're looking at that final play-off place, we never took our eye off it and we know what it takes to get there as we've been there many times before.

"But we're nowhere near where we want to be and it's important we keep our feet firmly on the ground.

"In years gone by you would have heard me shouting from the rooftops but we all know that there is an awful lot of work still to be done."

Robinson has regularly stressed the importance of keeping goal machine striker Patrick Bamford beyond January 5 – when his loan from Premier League side Chelsea expires – but now he wants to keep winger Dale Jennings too who has impressed since arriving from Championship outfit Barnsley last month.

His deal is also set to expire on January 5.

"Dale Jennings is a sensational young player," said Robinson.

"I know his appetite and quality for football.

"He's a wonderful character and a unique individual but he is a tremendous talent and he's one of the better loan signings I've made."

• Midfielder George Baldock has penned a new two-and-a-half year deal at stadiummk.

The 20-year-old put pen to paper before the match with Port Vale, and has made 20 appearances for the club so far this season.

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